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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 006154

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM JO

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS: STATUS OF JSCR; MB DEMONSTRATION
TACTICS

REF: A. AMMAN 5838

¶B. AMMAN 5576

Classified By: DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION GREGORY L. BERRY. REASONS: 1.5
(b) and (d)

¶11. (C) SUMMARY The President of the Jordanian Society for Citizens' Rights (JSCR) told us October 14 that despite the recent reports of a GOJ "walkback" from its threat to close the JSCR (reftel A), he remains concerned that the JSCR will be rendered ineffective by a rumored new GOJ-appointed board of directors. In addition, he reported that the MB is planning to organize anti-USG demonstrations outside of Amman in areas where tribal influence is high in order to obviate a potentially harsh GOJ response. END SUMMARY.

THE FATE OF THE JSCR

¶12. (C) JSCR President Fawzi Samhoury told PolOff October 14 that, although the GOJ now states that the JSCR can remain open if it complies with the law, he is still worried about the final outcome of GOJ action. Samhoury said there are rumors that the JSCR will have to accept a new board appointed by the GOJ, and is worried that such a move would emasculate the JSCR. "If they take away the independence of my society, I will not participate in it anymore," he said. Hinting that GOJ scrutiny of the JSCR was in retaliation for his reporting on human rights, Samhoury said he recently met with Dr. Khaled Tahayneh of the Foreign Ministry, who told him that the GOJ is in particular upset that the USG's Human Rights Report for 2001 contained information about Palestinian-Jordanians who have lost their passports due to implementation of disengagement laws. "They know that I am your source for this information," he said.

MB ORGANIZING DEMONSTRATIONS OUTSIDE AMMAN

¶13. (C) Samhoury reported that the MB is planning to organize anti-USG demonstrations outside of Amman, "where there are fewer Palestinians and the tribal leaders have greater control." He said that the MB believes security forces will be less likely to use excessive force against demonstrators in tribal-controlled locations and thus people will be less inhibited from demonstrating. Samhoury reported that the hawkish Ahmed Kawfah of the MB gave a speech last Friday at the local mosque in Tafileh in an attempt to organize a future demonstration there. When a local Ministry of Religious Affairs-appointed Imam objected, Kawfah physically pushed him aside. Samhoury said that the MB plans to hold several demonstrations in small cities such as Tafileh, but his sources had no further specifics.

COMMENT

¶14. (C) This was our first meeting with Samhoury since the GOJ signaled that it may not, after all, dissolve the JSCR. Samhoury is still patient, but is worried about the future of the JSCR and the potential for it to be emasculated by a rumored GOJ-appointed board of directors. We have not heard any indications from other sources that the GOJ is considering such a move, but will closely monitor the situation.
GNEHM